1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Chapter II

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE KOLS

There is considerable variation in the material culture of the Kols. This is due to the economic changes which rapidly occur when these primitive people come into contact with cities and their industrial order. The Kols make excellent workers, and in many of the industrial centres of Central India the majority of the cheap labour is supplied by them. This group, however, is not typical of the Kols; and the following description of their material culture is based upon the village Kol, who, while having considerable contact with modern influences, still clings mostly to the older ways known to his people for centuries.

The Village. While this study is particularly of the Kols who are in contact with Hindu culture, nevertheless a few words should be written about the more primitive Kols who live in villages tucked away in some rather inaccessible spot. Such villages are usually not found among the trees of the forest, but in an open space. The form which the village takes depends on the terrain and also upon the general custom of the area. The Gonds generally build their houses in separate enclosures, each an individual unit. We have found a few Kol villages of this type. Sometimes there have been two or three houses within a thorny stockade.

It is more usual, however, to find the Kols grouped together as a single unit. The form of the primitive village varies, but the shoe-string type predominates. The village has but the one central pathway which winds between small courts plastered with mud and cow dung situated immediately in front of the house. The court is usually clean, the pathway seldom so.

Primitive villages do not show many signs of permanency. The huts are of a type that can be destroyed over night if it should seem wise to shift the village. In actual practice, however, the Kol does not make a move quickly. Most of these villages though very temporary in their make-up have nevertheless been in existence for years.

The cattle sheds, where they exist, form a part of the hut and may only be distinguished from human habitations by the fact that they are more open. The Kols do not keep pigs, nor do they have gardens about their huts. Sometimes a form of pumpkin may be allowed to grow by the wall and climb over the roof. A *nim* tree (*Melia azadirachta*) will usually be found on the central pathway and under it a raised platform of mud where most of the village worship is observed. There are, generally speaking, no well defined village

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

basis of the black colour is soot. Sometimes this is obtained by burning certain kinds of wood and coconut shells. It is finely powdered and mixed with water. Sometimes milk from the breast is said to be a desirable solvent. After pricking, the parts are oiled with a mixture of *haldi* and *til* oil, which soothes the affected parts and removes any impurity from the touch of the tattooer.

Fig. 15

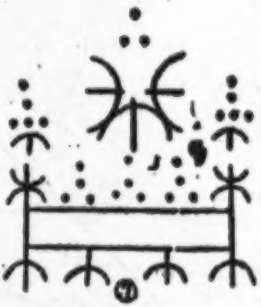

Fig. 16

AGRICULTURE. Kols mostly work as labourers in the fields of others, and even where they rent their fields, there is nothing in their methods which is not characteristic of the whole countryside. February to April is the usual slack season, although during the latter part of this period the wheat crop is harvested in Central India, and the threshing season is on. Before the rains at the end of June the ground is made ready for the first showers, and is roughly scratched with rude ploughs. Just before the rains the seed is broadcast in a prepared plot and is transplanted in the mud after the monsoon has broken. Only men sow the seed. From July to September the rice is growing and must be weeded and looked after. The weeding is generally done by women, but men also help. In October the rice is cut and threshed and stored. The soil, still moist from the monsoon rains, is now prepared for the wheat crop which is sown about the end of October or early in November. The wheat also requires weeding and care, and is ready for the harvest in late March and April. Religious observances in connection with agriculture are described in a later chapter.

h:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

The Khangars of Central India have a tradition akin to the one related of the Thakuriyas, of a slaughter by a Bundela Rajput after they were made drunk.[1] This may be an altogether different story but probably belongs to the same period when the Rajputs came into Bundelkhand. No first-hand accounts were obtained by us which would shed any light on the origin of this *kurhi*.

5. *Garhvariya*. While this name occurs eight times in the list of Kol subdivisions nevertheless we found only one living specimen in spite of the fact that there were said to be many of this group around Jubbulpore. This particular Garhvariya came to us in a group of Thakuriyas and Rautiyas and was the butt of their jokes. He was short and dark and had a very flat nose, much broader than is usual with Kols. The other *kurhis* said to his face that they would have nothing to do with him socially. When asked about himself he said that he was a Rautiya who had the misfortune to be born out of Rewa State and hence was called a Garhvariya. The other Kols present would not agree that this was the real situation. Garhvariyas are considered unclean and no other sept will take their girls or give them their own daughters in marriage. They are mainly employed as field labourers. It is not unlikely that we met others, but they would not admit that they were Garhvariyas.

6. *Mawasi*. Very little was to be ascertained from the Kols about this group. They seem to be a very "low" *kurhi*, and do not even call in a Chamarin to act as midwife and cut the cord of the newly born infant, doing such work with their own hands. They are so low that no social intercourse is possible with Kols like Rautiyas and Thakuriyas. They are considered the most despised of all the Kols and "live just like Basors who are outcastes and make baskets and keep pigs."

The Munda tribe known as the Korkus and found in the Satpura hills of south central India are sometimes called Mowasis.[2] Regarding Korkus Russell and Hiralal state that the sept names of the Korkus are in many cases identical with those of the Kols and Korwas, which may mean that they are an offshoot of "the great Kol or Munda" tribe. The word "Mowasi" has reference to the largest of their subdivisions but its derivation is uncertain. The Census Report for the Central India Agency says : "The Mawasis were reputed to be a fighting section of the Kols."[3]

7. *Kathariya*. This *kurhi* takes its name from *kathri*, a mattress

1 Russell and Hiralal, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 439.
2 *Ibid.* Vol. iii, p. 550.
3 *Census of India*, 1931, xx: 1, p. 237.

1:Griffiths M-3 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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CHAPTER XII

LIFE STORIES OF LIVING KOLS

SUKHULAL: A KOL WHO STAYED IN HIS VILLAGE

I was born in the village of Kharara Ghat and was the youngest of five brothers. There were also three sisters in my family, which was a large one, as there are about fifty living relatives on my father's side alone. When I was about sixteen years of age my parents decided that I should be married and they found a girl for me in the village of Barela. My wife and I have lived happily together, and we have had two sons. My father died two years ago (in 1935). I have never had to leave Kharara Ghat in order to earn money. I have always seemed to be able to find things to do about the village and have earned enough to be well supplied with the things I need. One thing I do is to go into the forest and cut wood which I carry on my head to Jubbulpore. It is hard work, but it has to be done. My wife and sons also help out by gathering *tendu* leaves for the *biri* manufacturers. All of my five brothers live here in Barela. Together we control about fifteen acres of land which is rented from a *malguzar*. It is not all in one place, but in three or four places. We all do our share of work on this, and the income from the wheat and pulse is shared evenly by us. But all the money I make from selling wood, or grass, or *tendu* leaves I keep myself and we do not share it.

I have become one of the *panchayat* of this village and take a keen interest in the welfare of this village and our community. I would like you to put a school in our village. The nearest school is four miles away—too far for our small children to go even if we were sure they would be treated right if they were admitted. I can read a little and sign my name. I never went to school, but learned this from a man in Jubbulpore, who used to teach me after I had sold my wood. I even have bought some books.

I have no debts and do not drink any strong liquors. I have never been seriously ill, nor had any serious trouble in the family, nor have we suffered from the want of food and clothing. I have never had an accident either even though I have gone on hunting expeditions in charge of beaters. Very often some Europeans from Jubbulpore come out to our village which is close to good hunting places and I go with them and show them where they may find game.

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159
[595] be two wives in my house and they will always fight and quarrel, which I don't like at all. And I can only support one wife.

I have a second wife, but only one. She helps me in my daily [434] work and comes out with me into the fields and helps me dig and till the ground and together we earn about eight annas a day. At other times we work on the farm which we rent. We have about one acre and must give one-third of the produce to the *malguzar*. If the crops [241] are good we get some benefit, but if they are not it is not worth the labour. I sow my fields in pulse, wheat and *kodo*. (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*). Often we get enough to eat for the whole year from our field. For about four to six months we eat *kodo* and then for three to four months we eat wheat and in this way provide for our food. [464] This year (1937) our crops failed badly and we did not get much out of our field so we have to work as day labourers wherever we could get work. Farming brings us less return than daily coolie work, even [427 314] though the latter is irregular. I have also taken a contract for a piece of ground where lac trees grow and pay rupees five a year for the privilege of collecting the lac. The contract is for twenty years and is made with the owner of the forest in Silgnor village. I also graze my cattle there, and after deducting my animal tax I get a profit of Rs. ten or twelve per year. I don't like to work as a coolie as we are often mistreated when under the authority of one man. I prefer to take or make a contract with people who are good farmers and thus go and work in their fields according to my own free choice and desire. Thus I am saved from all kinds of mistreatments which are meted out by owners or supervisors, and this, which is true of me, is true of all members of our Kol community. We would prefer to die of hunger than to have our liberty taken away and be treated as slaves.

Once when I was very young a great crisis befell our family. [731] It was at the time when almost the whole of India suffered from a great famine (1899-1900). As my father was dead the support of the family fell upon the shoulders of my mother. Every morning and evening she used to cut grass wherever she could gather it and sell it to the people who could pay. She used to bring roots from the jungles and prepare a sort of bread for us out of them. She even brought the leaves of certain kinds of trees and made them do as vegetables in our rude food. Oh, it was a very hard time for us, but a mother's love and care saved us from that great famine. She used to work all day long; and though she seemed to be very old she worked like a young woman. Finally, after it was over she fell sick and died. She blessed us before she died. Her blessings are still with me and since then I have not suffered the want of anything. Now I have a *pakka* house.

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children, three of whom are now dead. They died of fevers and smallpox. I was married a second time and this wife has had but one child—the boy who is now going to school.

People around here count me one of the rich and well-to-do farmers of Kotmi, even though I am now only 35 years of age. I am now engaged in a controversy over a piece of land and the *panch* has not been able to settle it to my satisfaction. I have threatened to take the matter to court and I hope the *panch* will do the right thing.

Phaggu: A Kol who Returned to the Old Paths[1]

My father was born in Barela and he held a few acres of land and farmed them and gained sufficient wealth to make us independent. He had nine children, five of them were boys and four were girls. Two of the sisters are now living, while two are dead. The time came when my father could not profitably farm his land so a Mohammedan of influence bought the field and father worked for him in the same field for forty or forty-five years. My elder brother is working as a factory coolie in Jubbulpore and I work as a coolie in Barela.

I too was born here in Barela. My father died when I was about thirty years of age. I did not get any share of my father's property, for when he died I was not at home but in Nagpur. I lived at home with my father for eighteen years and was then married. I started to school, but could not continue to study because the school master used to punish his students very much and once when he tried to punish me I tripped him up and he fell and hurt his head. I was then in the first Hindi. This was during the great famine.

By the grace of Narayan we did not die of hunger during this awful famine, for we had enough to eat, especially those first eighteen years when I never thought of hard work such as coolie work. When I was eighteen I took a rupee from father and set off for Nagpur and travelled without a ticket all the day. I would get off the train at every station and as the train started I used to get in another compartment. Thus I reached Balaghat and got a job in the Manganese mines where I worked for about ten years. I could not earn anything there except enough to feed me:

Jahan jao bhag,
Wahan lage Ag.
Age Age sab Sanichar ja raha hai
Tu kahan ja raha hai?

1. See Frontispiece and plate XXVII.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

159 and my parents. My father asked me: "Harlal, did you bring any money with you?" I said, "Yes, I had money, but I spent it all." He did not say any more nor scold me, but asked me to live in the house and do coolie work along with them. But I did not like this and again left Barela and began to work again in the same bungalow where I was a *panka* puller and continued to work there for a whole year at Rs. 12/-.

Fortunately a big flood washed away the railway bridge over [464] the Nerbudda river and there was much demand for workers to rebuild it. I went there and got a job and the railway authorities liked my work and were pleased by my skill and I was given the work of a blacksmith where I worked happily for six years.

During this time my father also was working steadily and was able to collect some money for my marriage as I was past the marriageable age. He called me back for the marriage and I had to return, because I too was anxious to get married and had some money [465] saved up for it. But after my marriage I again left home and went back to my work on the railway, for by that time I was getting Rs. 19/- per month, which is a very good salary. I left my new wife with my parents. My father came to see me at my work, and walked the whole distance of forty miles and pleaded with me to go back to the house because they were all missing me a great deal. So I took six days leave and came back to Barela. When the people of my Kol community saw me they all began to give me advice, saying that half a *chapati* in your own home is better than a whole *chapati* in another place. So I listened to their advice and did not return to my work on the railway.

After a year at home there arose a great quarrel between my [578] father and myself. My father began to ill treat me so that my wife and I left Barela and went to Kharara Ghat where my parent-in-laws and some other relatives were living. As there was much wood in the jungle about Kharara Ghat both of us began to cut wood and carry it to Jubbulpore to be sold there. But as time went on we became 159 very hard up for money and we asked our parents and relatives to 426 give us some money, but they absolutely refused, so we had to borrow money from a money-lender on security. We had some jewellery and ornaments, and with them as security we borrowed Rs. 100/- and with this we began to buy wood and collect it in a great heap near our village of Kharara Ghat. This we sold at a profit in Jubbulpore. In the meantime when my father thought I was well off he asked me for a loan of Rs. 25/- and as I had no cash at that time I had to refuse him saying that at present I had none. I also told him that I had borrowed money from others and had left the jewellery as security for

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

159 In those days there was no road to Nagpur, but only a jungle pathway. We went to Nagpur because we heard that a road was to be started 159 there which was going to Jubbulpore and they wanted Kols to do the work. We began to cut the forest from the Nagpur side and came 464 toward Jubbulpore. But due to some *jadu tonha* (the spell of a magician) our Kols began to die and some of us were very much frightened. My father got permission to leave from the doctor and we came back to Jubbulpore another way, by the jungles of Mandala. Since that time we have lived here at Salivara (about six miles from Jubbulpore) where we have broken stones for the roads and done some other work if we have been able to find it.

I have seen two generations come and go and the men about us 159 belong to the third. At present I am supervising work among the [622] Kols of this place who break stones and they call me *Mukaddam* or the head of the village. My financial condition is much better than the other Kols here because I farm a piece of land and have some goats [342 and cattle. I have a wife living with me but do not live in a house 178] with mud walls, but in a *jhopri* or hut. Why? Because our forefathers lived this way and I too prefer this mode of living.

The above life stories are the simple annals of Kols with varying backgrounds, and are recorded as they told them. They omit many things that one might like to know about, but give an insight into [123] what seems important to them. These stories were obtained only after long acquaintance and friendly contact.

The sketch of Sunnulal reveals a simple man who has stuck to his village with the opportunities it afforded and who has not attempted to break through his environment into the affairs of the outside world. As a result he is contented, and from the economic point of view has everything a village man thinks necessary. He has never had to meet the stresses and strains of an alien type of life.

Bajranji has vivid memories of the great famine and a mother's successful efforts to avert disaster. He shows the independent spirit of the Kol who would rather make a contract for work than take a daily wage and be bossed around.

Motiram, who lives in the "aboriginal belt" has also successfully maintained his independence and built up for himself a satisfactory economic situation. He respects himself and feels he can boss the *panch* and coerce it.

Phaggu is the sad story of a man who has wandered here and there and at the end has nothing to show for it. He is out of harmony

l:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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Chapter XIII

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE KOLS

433 The economic condition of the cultivators of the Central Provinces
434 is not a very prosperous one. The following table is reproduced from the Census Report for 1931 and is for the average cultivator. It will be seen from the following pages that the Kols fall far below this meagre income.

Item	Normal	When crop is 25% below normal
Size of holding ..	Acres 21	
Value of gross crop outturn after deducting marketing expenses	Rupees 491	Rupees 369
Income from subsidiary sources	50	50
Total income ..	541	419
Cost of maintenances and clothing ..	214	214
Cultivating expenses ..	157	157
Rent ..	21	21
Total necessary expenses ..	392	392
Balance ..	149	27[1]

434 It is further noted that from this balance the worker must provide sums for funerals and marriages, repairs to buildings, journey costs, repayment on debt (the normal debt of the cultivator is said to be Rs. 227) interest charges, the cost of education for his children and the little luxuries such as *pan* and tobacco. These figures are worked out for a family which has an average of three surviving children. Not much can be done in normal years, to say nothing of bad years when actual deficits are expected and more money is borrowed.

● 464 As will be observed in the following pages, Kols are mostly day
434 labourers and under village conditions the income of day labourers is very small. Usually no money is given; they are paid in kind. In villages near Katni it was found that the field labourer was paid three

1 *Census of India*, 1931, XII : I, p. 60.

Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

pounds of wheat for a day's work in the field. If a cash arrangement is entered into, the rate is 1½ annas for the same period of labour. In urban areas the situation is better. In 1911 the average wage was four annas a day. In 1921 it was six annas and ten years later it had increased to nine annas. It was our belief that seven years later wages had considerably fallen. Kol labourers in Jubbulpore industrial plants seldom received more than 5½ annas per day while for the same work in Katni and Maihar they received but four annas. As a rule women workers received about half the above.

It should be kept in mind that we have with the Kols the phenomenon of a primitive and backward people coming into the stream of rural and urban life. Many changes have occurred and many more will take place in the future.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. Kol people live together in groups, either in a section of the village or in a village of their own. Taking the village as a whole it would appear that they are economically well below the average. In certain places, however, they seem to be making a distinct advance as they continue to dwell there and develop a place for themselves in the life of the community. A resident of Barela, not himself a Kol, said that he had been watching them for many years. He said that twenty-five to thirty years ago they were very backward compared to their present condition. At that time they lived in grass huts, wore only loin cloths and in every respect were jungly, backward and inferior; but now the majority of Kols in Barela have houses with tiled roofs and thick mud walls, although the earlier type of dwelling is still occasionally found. This is indicated in Plate V. They now put on better clothing and in general their economic standard seems to be rising. In another place we found Kols putting tiles on their roofs which normally cost Rs. 20 per 1,000. These were being laid on top of the grass thatch. Country tile is more generally used and it costs from ten to twelve rupees to cover the house in this manner. Whenever the Kols are in contact with a somewhat higher culture and have a sense of security as regards lands and tenancy, they tend to make their houses much better than otherwise. Whenever we have asked groups why they have built and are living in such crude houses, they have told us that they do not know from one day to the next whether they will be staying there; and if they have to move on tomorrow they can easily pull up and leave. It is also said that this was the way their forefathers dwelt, and why should they do otherwise. Their employment is very uncertain and hence their houses are crude.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

prepare tiles in a workshop near Deori; a Barela Kol has taken up the work of a mason and bricklayer. In another family we found that members had been jungle postal-runners for three generations. In Sihora they said that their chief occupation was digging in the fields, though they also cut wood and sold grass; only one or two rented lands. At Katni we found that they were chiefly employed in the cement works, but would soon be going elsewhere, as the cement factories were in the process of closing down. In some of the villages about Katni they were found to be mostly labourers in the surrounding fields. At Kymore thousands are employed in the great cement factories; at Maihar they are mostly engaged in lime-kiln work. Near Rewa City they seem to be mostly serfs and labourers. Further north they grind sandstone for the glass works, and at Chunar in the United Provinces help to dig the rock out of the hillsides. We found a few literate Kols in Katni who had learned to read in the Church Mission School. One of these was a clerk in a warehouse at busy times of the year; the rest of the year he would do whatever he could find which often was nothing but coolie work.

THE SITUATION IN THE VILLAGES: *Land and Income.* In our visits to numerous villages we made enquiries as to the economic situation on the part of the Kols living there. A careful survey was made near Jubbulpore. Text figure 30 shows the area. Only a few Kols in the large group at Barela actually rent lands for farming purposes; either on shares or on straight rent. In Kharara Ghat the situation seems to be the opposite, for nearly every household there holds land from the *malguzar*. Money is earned on the side from the sale of wood, grass and *tendu* leaves for *biris*. In Barela a survey of thirty-nine families indicated that only three held lands, and that the total acreage so held was but 5¼ acres. Thirty families in Kharara Ghat hold 82 acres of land; in some cases taxes for the same are paid direct to the Government, while to the *malguzar* they say they pay Rs. 10 per *khandi* of wheat sown, this being considered as 1/3 the produce of the land.

Barela Kols do most of the coolie work on the roads near that place and also labour on the farms as occasion offers. All the able members of the family work and we found that on the average the family income was Rs. ten to twelve per month for this type of labour. One dealer in charcoal said that he cleared locally in Barela about Rs. 120 per year. Another Barela Kol has the custom of purchasing wood from the Gonds who bring it down from the hills near-by. This is bought for five pice, is then cut up into shorter lengths by himself

 [text continues on middle of p. 266]

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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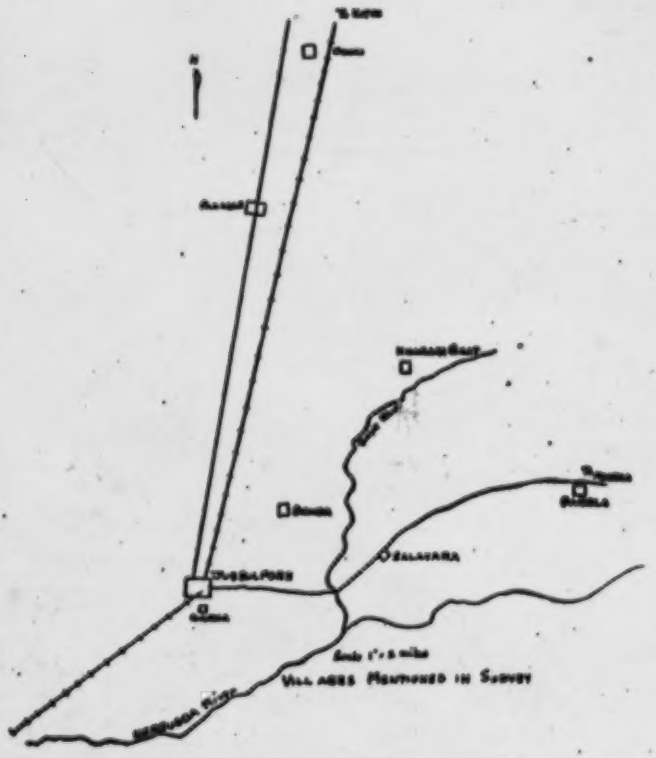

Fig. 30.

464 and family and is resold for ten pice, just double the amount he paid
434 for it. Another Kol, acquainted with brick-laying and general re-
[439] pairing, earns twelve annas per day when work is available. A few
in Barela deal in *tendu* leaves and sell the same to contractors from
[556] Jubbulpore. There was only one Kol in Barela whom the other Kols
considered wealthy. "Wealthy" was defined as the possession of
[427] ornaments, animals, and some money. The rent for land about Barela
varies considerably as it is not all of equal value. Two Kols, however,
were payng at the rate of Rs. 4-10-0 per acre.

333 At Deori we found that the Kol colony was mostly employed in
464 the tile [factory where they are paid by piece work and receive
434

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Rs. 4-8-0 per 1,000 tiles molded and put on the rack to harden. They told us that the average Kol worker would mold about 1,000 tiles per week.

In Panagar there are about 100 families of Kols. Some of them keep chickens and sell the few eggs they get in the local bazaar, or even take them to Jubbulpore on market days. Three or four own bullock carts. The rest of the community divide their time between working on the roads and doing coolie work in the fields when such work is available. This brings them from two to three annas per day. This work is far from steady, being largely seasonal.

In Benda village there are fifteen houses of Kols. Their main work is breaking stone for the metalled roads and preparing limestone for the kilns. They believe that by steady work they can make up to Rs. three per week, but the work is very hard and the hours are long. A few collect *tendu* leaves in season and when other work is slack they go out to the jungles and cut wood. They can earn from three to three and a half annas per day in that way. None of the Benda Kols does any farming.

At Salavara village on the Gaur River, we found that all were engaged in breaking stones for road metal. Their report seemed to indicate that they had to work harder for what they got than some other groups. They said it took them fifteen days to break a *saikara*—a stone measuring approximately 1,000 cubic feet—that two men were required and that they received Rs. 2-8-0 for the *saikara*. Five years ago, they said, they got Rs. 4/- for the same measure. They claim that the work is also harder now as they have to go further for suitable rock.

At Garha close to Jubbulpore, there is a fair-sized Kol community. The village is quite distinct from any other place and about 100 Kol families dwell there. Their occupations are various, and but few have steady work. This group consists mostly of coolies who get work wherever it is available or where the best wages are offered. Sawing wood is a common opening as they do not live far from the timber yards where all the sawing of planks is done by hand. During the wheat harvest they are nearly all away in the fields, leaving their houses empty for the few weeks of the harvesting season.

On a preliminary visit to Rewa State we went to a small Kol community not far from Rewa City. These Kols have considerable land for which they pay rental to a Mahratta landlord. What this group told us has been confirmed by many others, both in and out of Rewa State and seems to characterize the conditions of the Kols there. One informant told us that he was married about twelve years pre-

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

566 426 [124] viously, at which time he incurred a debt of Rs. fourteen for the expenses of the wedding. This was borrowed from a *Thakur* of a near-by village who appeared most glad to lend it to him. Ever since that day this *Thakur* has considered him as his serf, and he is supposed to go daily to him; and even though he has worked for the *Thakur* for the past twelve years he has not cleared the debt and does not believe that he ever will. He is virtually a slave of this man, is on call at any time, and must give him the first work until he no longer requires him. For each day's work the *Thakur* will give him 1½ *seers* of *chana* (usually *Dolichos lablab*) or perhaps the same amount of barley still in the head. Money was never given, nor rice or wheat. This group of Kols in Rewa was a very intelligent one on the whole, but indicated that Rewa State was not a place where one could get more than just [538] the necessary food. As one expressed it: "In Rewa there is no stomach hunger, only money hunger." This appeared to be quite a common expression over a wide area. Food was available there, but no money for the other necessities of life nor for weddings, burials and the like.

339 464 434 In centres like Kymore and Katni where there are large cement works, the majority of the coolies employed in the many types of manual labour are Kols. The work is very hard and the wages are low: usually not more than four annas a day for males and three annas for female workers.

434 [423] [162] Kharara Ghat, the isolated Kol village, is perhaps as independent economically as any Kol group studied by us. It was previously noted that this village controls about eighty acres of land. They say that ordinarily they do not sell the farm products, rather keeping them for the use of the village as well as holding a small reserve for emergencies. The village contains about 135 adult persons and the land farmed takes care of their food. Money for other needs is gained 222 276 434 438 in many ways: during the months of May and June the leaves of the *tendu* tree (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) are picked for use in the *biri* manufacture. The leaves are gathered in the early morning or the evenings, and in the heat of the day the people sit under the trees or on the verandas of their houses and arrange the leaves in bundles of one hundred each, tying them with fibre. These bundles are then sold to contractors at the rate of four annas per hundred bundles. Prices vary somewhat according to the quality and the demand. The Kharara Ghat folk claim that they earn from Rs. 400 to 500 per year from the sale of these leaves.

434 313 Kharara Ghat has other sources of income. The village is situated on a jungly section on the edge of the reserved forest. Wood is

l;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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Chapter XIV

THE KOL TRIBE IN TRANSITION

178 114 It is rather difficult to compare the Kols of today with the Kols of an earlier period. There is no material old enough and complete enough to show the changes that are occurring in Kol life and thought. The best single account of the Kols of Central India is found in Mr. William Crooke's Volumes on *The Tribes and Castes of the N. W. Provinces and Oudh*. This was written some fifty-five years ago, and while it contains something that may be used in a comparative way it is not full enough. Russell and Hiralal's book which is about thirty years old is not specific enough and is based more on general Munda customs than it is on actual Kols in Central India. And yet to use Crooke's account as a criterion of conditions among the Kols of Central India some fifty years ago would not be quite fair, as his account is based largely on the Kols in the southern edge of the United Provinces. Thus he is talking of the Northern Kols. Our investigations have been mainly among the Southern Kols, but we have checked our materials in Rewa State, the centre of Kol distribution. The fairly consistent account of the main outlines of Kol life and experience has led us to believe that we have a fairly accurate account of things as they are today. Nevertheless one senses a great unexplored world of belief, custom and outlook of which but the edge has been touched. No anthropologist would claim finality for any study such as this.

From our discussions with Kols and observations and comparisons there have clearly been changes among them in the economic, social and religious spheres of life.

178 464 Economic Changes. The striking thing from the economic angle is that this tribe, a jungle people originally, is moving away from the forests, first into agricultural centres where they earn their livelihood as farm coolies or tenant farmers, and then on into the industrial world as the factory coolie.

The further the Kols have moved from their jungle life the more industrialized they have become. Kols in Jubbulpore are nearly all engaged in factory work, or some other form of industrial work such as sawyers, and those yet further from Rewa are in manganese mines. [566 221] There are still large groups of Kols who are agricultural serfs and others who follow the wheat crop at the harvesting seasons. Along with other

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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members of the family able to work they leave their rude huts and then return three or four months later with a bit of money with which to buy clothes and the like. Some of the women accompany them, though not the children, and when they return at the end of the season there are a large number of infants which have been born to them in the fields as they have worked.

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There are three strata among the Kols of today. From the economic view the factory coolies are better off. While wages are not high they are higher than can be won in agricultural or forest work and the income is steady. As forest people and agricultural serfs they may have enough to eat, but no money for anything else. Factory work brings three to four times the wage of the Kol who works away in the villages, and lasts the year round. Everywhere it is said that the Kols are the best group of workmen among those employed and often they are the main workers throughout a factory where unskilled labour is needed. As they are working in the factories they are also learning trades, and fifty years from now it may be found that Kols have taken up many trades and have made good. There is no occupational restriction as with many Hindu castes. [463]

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As the economic level is raised there is usually found a definite improvement in living conditions. Bad as the factory lines are they are much better than the rude huts of the jungle Kols. A Kol in Katni has built for himself a brick house of a very respectable appearance. In order to supplement their farm earnings the agricultural Kols still practise on the side their primitive occupations of wood and grass cutting. The industrial Kols are not able to do this, for they must work daily in the factory unless it happens to be closed on Sunday. On that day it will be found that a few Kols have gone out where wood may be cut and each brings back a load to the factory lines. This is cut for their own use and is not for sale. [313]

Wherever Kols have been settled for some years they have told us how they first came and lived in grass huts and how gradually, as they became sure of their place there and as work became fairly regular and certain, that they have put up better living quarters and finally have built good mud houses with tiled roofs. More is owned by them than they ever had before. They possess livestock and there may be considerable amounts invested in jewellery. [231 454]

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Judging from the pictures in books like Crooke, Russell and Hiralal and Roy's work on the Mundas and other related tribes, the Kols of today in Central India cover their persons with clothes much more completely than the earlier pictures represent. Today one finds but little exposure of the breasts by Kol women, and in the